



Scooters cause 9,500 injuries in US in 8 months

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A sharp rise in injuries related to using foot-propelled scooters is leading to an increased demand that children using them should

wear mandatory protective gear. The US Consumer Product Safety Commission has reported that emergency room visits from



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scooter-related mishaps are up 700% since May. In all, 9,500 injuries have been reported so far this year, with over 4,000 of these reported in August alone.

Most scooter accidents have occurred in children aged 15 years or younger; fractures account for 30% of the injuries.

Scooters have become enormously popu-

lar in the United States, Europe, Hong Kong, and Israel; both children and adults can be seen using them in crowded cities. The current models are updated versions of their 1950s predecessors and feature lightweight, foldable metals such as aluminium or titanium, narrow bases, and low friction wheels similar to those used in in-line skates. Most

models weigh less than 4.5 kg, cost \$80 to \$120, and are portable.

Most injuries in scooter riders are sprains, but fractures and dislocations accounted for almost a third of the reported mishaps. Head injuries also occur. So far, no deaths have been reported.

Compared with the number of injuries from in-line skating and skateboarding, which amounted to 100,000 and 60,000, respectively, in 1999, those reported in scooter riders seem low. However, this may just reflect a catch up period; in 1992, when in-line skating first became popular, the Consumer Product Safety Commission collected only 10,000 reports of in-line skating accidents.

The commission is recommending that children who use scooters don't use full safety gear, including helmets, knee pads, and elbow pads. Additionally, they recommend that users adhere to well-paved surfaces and avoid street traffic. Children aged 8 years and younger should not use scooters without supervision, and using them at night should be avoided, said the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Ann Brown, the commission's chairwoman, commented: "We're trying to head off some of the kind of injuries that happen with in-line skates and let people know about the safety gear early on." Some states are proposing that children on scooters wear bicycle helmets.

Meanwhile, legislation to ban motorized versions of the scooters have been drafted in Colorado, and such scooters have been prohibited in New South Wales, Australia.